

## Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on July 28, 2011

### Members Present:

Douglas Brimhall  
Joe Cooper  
Vincent DiBella  
Keiko Dilbeck  
Merlin Ellis  
Natascha Karadsheh  
Lars Nielson, Jr. via phone  
Wesley Ringel

### Members Absent:

Dr. D. Kent Layton  
Dr. Robbi D. Venditti  
Pamela Williams

### Staff Present:

Rob Schultz  
Sunnee O'Rork  
Tom Wilson  
Jean Kaminski

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

### Approval of Minutes

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes from the May 26 meeting. There being none, Vince DiBella made a motion, Keiko Dilbeck seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of May 26, 2011. They will be posted on the City's web page.

**Public Comments:** There was no public present.

### Discuss and Take Action – Elect a New Chair – Douglas Brimhall

Since there was no meeting in June (the Board voted to meet every other month last year), Douglas Brimhall returned for the July meeting in his role as Board Chair in order to conduct the meeting and elect a new Chair. Douglas Brimhall nominated Lars Nielson, Jr. to serve as Board Chair for FY11-12. Mr. Nielson accepted the nomination. Douglas Brimhall made a motion, Vince DiBella seconded, and the Board members present unanimously elected Lars Nielson, Jr. as the new Chair. Since Mr. Neilson was attending the meeting via phone, Douglas Brimhall continued to serve as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

### Discuss and Take Action – Elect a New Vice-Chair – Douglas Brimhall

Keiko Dilbeck nominated Merlin Ellis to serve as Vice-Chair for FY11-12. Merlin Ellis accepted the nomination. Keiko Dilbeck made a motion, Joe Cooper seconded, and the Board members present unanimously elected Merlin Ellis as the new Vice-Chair.

### Discuss and Provide Direction – Consider Board Members Attending the September 26 (changed from original date of August 22) City Council Meeting for Proclamation of Mesa Encore Theater on Their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

At the September 26 City Council meeting, Mayor Scott Smith will proclaim September 30, 2011, as Mesa Encore Theatre day in honor of their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as the longest performing community arts organization in Mesa. September 30 is the opening of their second play of the season, "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change!" Lars Nielson, Jr., newly elected Chair, stated he thought that Douglas Brimhall, former Chair, should have the honor of being there to support and speak to the proclamation, as he was instrumental in making that happen. Board members were invited to attend the September 26 Council meeting to show their support for arts and culture in Mesa and to honor one of Mesa Arts Center's Founding Resident Companies on this special occasion.

### Note: Introduction of New Board Members – Douglas Brimhall

This item was not on the agenda as the two new members were appointed after the Board packets went out. Douglas Brimhall introduced Natascha Karadsheh and Wesley Ringel.

**Wesley Ringel** – a professional musician moved to Mesa two years ago. He spent a lot of time on Mill Ave., in his leisure time, and loved the atmosphere. Several months ago, he happened to be in downtown Mesa and was surprised to see what Mesa has to offer. He saw great opportunity and potential for Mesa and wanted to become involved in promoting and supported arts and culture in Mesa, as well as having a voice in the revitalization of downtown.

**Natascha Karadsheh** – is a native Arizonan. She lived in Mesa in the past, then in Phoenix for many years, and moved back to Mesa five years ago. She has a love and strong interest in the arts and wanted to become involved in her

community. She too believes that Mesa has a great future and is interested in how we can draw more people to Mesa and the downtown area.

## **Staff Reports**

### Arizona Museum for Youth (AMY) – Sunnee O’Rork

- AMY ended the year with a total of 65,000 in attendance. Since “Peanuts” opened in July, they have had close to 5,500 attending; a strong July for them and a good year.
- The new Membership brochure was passed around. The Museum now has approximately 1,350 members.
- A poster of the new “Warner Brothers Cartoon” exhibit was also distributed for Board members to take and distribute to colleagues, family, friends, and schools. The exhibit opens to the public on September 30.
- There were 203 in attendance for the opening of “Peanuts at Bat.” Mesa Encore Theatre and East Valley Children’s Theatre performed at the opening.
- Sunnee O’Rork was on sabbatical from a Piper fellowship grant and visited ten Museums in May to research traveling exhibition business practices. She was at: The Magic House in St. Louis, the Indianapolis Children’s Museum, Minnesota Children’s Museum, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in D.C., The Strong National Museum of Play, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan, Sony Wonder Tech Lab in NY, the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, Stepping Stones Museum for Children in Norwalk, Ct., and the Boston Children’s Museum. The experience exceeded expectations; she was able to learn what works at these museums and what doesn’t work. To complete the sabbatical, Ms. O’Rork will travel to CA to visit children’s museums there and learn about their business practices for traveling exhibits.
- Congratulations to Jeffory Morris, Youth Museum Curator, for being accepted into the Eller Executive MBA program at the University of Arizona and for receiving a Community Leadership Scholarship. The program is for 14 months, and he will continue to work full time at the Museum while he is attending classes. His goal is to become a Museum Director.
- The Piper Fellowship provides for staff development as well. Sunnee O’Rork and Jeffory Morris attended the Association of Children’s Museum Interactivity Conference in Houston and spoke with the Children’s Museum in Houston about their traveling exhibit business practices.
- A pixel wall activity has been added in ArtVille.
- The Piper Trust awarded the Museum an on-line assessment by Board Source, which includes an analysis of the Board and a Board retreat. After reviewing the assessment, the consultants will conduct the retreat and share the results of the assessment, which will help bring the Board to the next level. The retreat will take place on September 17. Board Source provides this service nationally and the Piper Trust funds it locally.
- The Museum also received a marketing grant, Image for the Future, from Piper Trust; this will help in branding and re-imagining the Museum. The Museum has hired Reach Advisors to help the Museum create a name, graphic appearance and message that will invite people to come inside and explore. On her sabbatical travels, Ms. O’Rork said the Museums that really stood out were the ones that when you saw the outside, you couldn’t wait to go inside – she would like to create a clearer image who AMY is – a children’s museum focused on art.

The question was asked how the Museums advertise. Sunnee O’Rork reported that they have a small advertising budget of \$20,000, and they have a person on staff that deals with marketing. They are different from AzMNH in that AMY is focused on younger families with their target age being 0 – 8 years of age. The Museum has a marketing plan for each exhibit and uses a variety of tactics depending on the exhibit.

### Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Dr. Tom Wilson

- The design review for the Mesa Grande welcome center was successful and approved by the Board. The Museum is on pace to open in-line with the Centennial celebration on February 11, 2012. The Museum has recently received a lot of press on the site.
- The Museum experienced their best year ever in revenue – approximately \$626,000; and the second best in attendance at 137,600 visitors. Since 2000, the Museum has had 1.8M visitors calculating approximately 40% – 50% coming from Mesa and 50% – 60% coming from around the East Valley, as well as from every county in Arizona. This has been a boost for the Museum and has helped to energize the economy for downtown Mesa.
- The Museum is on pace to hit \$70,000 in revenue in July, which would be the strongest July in their history.
- The “Hubble Space Telescope: New Views of the Universe” exhibit opened last Friday and will be at the Museum for six months. The exhibit comes from NASA and has received good press; three newspaper articles to-date and TV Channel 3 and Channel 12 have broadcast from the Museum. Staff is working on acquiring additional TV coverage.
- “Sea of Cortez” closes on July 31 and will be replaced with an exhibit from the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum called “Vanishing Circles” that will focus on endangered wildlife in the Sonora Desert region. The exhibit will informally open around the second week of August with a formal opening on September 16.

Natascha Karadsheh asked what Dr. Wilson attributes the growth of Museum revenue and attendance to. Dr. Wilson jokingly replied – great leadership, and added that he thinks building market share has been a large factor. The Museum receives great word-of-mouth advertising and has been experiencing good press coverage. He added that the Museum has a very small marketing budget (\$15,000) and no marketing staff person; however, they are going to add a little more into the budget for marketing this coming year and have received some additional money from Department administration to hire an assistant to help with marketing and public relations. These factors are all helpful. Sunnee O’Rork noted that changing the name from Mesa Southwest Museum to the Arizona Museum of Natural History has also contributed to building audience. The Museum targets cable channels, such as Nickelodeon, and family magazines, such as *Raising Arizona Kids*, etc. when purchasing advertising targeting kids and families. They are also using social networking and are plugged into Face Book and Tweeter.

### Mesa Arts Center (MAC)/Mesa Contemporary Arts (MCA) – Rob Schultz

- The MAC Store is officially closed and will transition into an Artist Cooperative Gallery to re-open in conjunction with the Season Kick-Off event weekend in September. It will be run by the artists and volunteers. Artists will have ownership in the store and will show and sell their work. For the first year, the Mesa Arts Center Foundation, who formerly ran the operations of the store, will continue to align with the Cooperative and eventually sunset to be solely run by the artists.
- Mandy Buscas, Arts Education Program Coordinator, will be introducing a new Creative Aging Project. Tessa Windt, a fiber artist, will be at Serrine Adult Day Care Center in downtown Mesa, and Elizabeth Johnson, a dance instructor, will be at East Valley Adult Resources near downtown and Fellowship Square in east Mesa to conduct workshops with the residents.
- Mesa Arts Center will host the Season Kick-off Event, Guitars and Handlebars, the weekend of September 9 – 11. Mesa Contemporary Arts will have new exhibitions installed for the opening that will have artist designed guitars, signed and painted guitars by famous musicians, and artist designed motorcycles. Mesa Arts Center campus will have activity throughout the weekend with food courts, live entertainment each day, Studio demos, etc. The event is free to the public.
- Planning for Day of the Dead Festival in late October and the Mesa Arts Festival in December continues and is on track. In March, there will be a 10-day festival over spring break. These will also be free to the public.
- There has been one small change in the Light Rail stations – it has been decided, after recent meetings with the public and stakeholders, that the public art piece that was to be aligned with Morris Street will be moved closer to Country Club and serve as a gateway to the downtown area. They are moving forward with the 60% design completion phase and once completed, there will be a presentation to the Board.
- It has been a great year for the Mesa Arts Center education program – revenue was up 20%; with a total for the year of \$495,000 compared to \$390,000 in the previous year.

Rob Schultz made a presentation to Douglas Brimhall. Mr. Schultz thanked him for his dedication, leadership, and six years of service on the Board. Mr. Brimhall said that he is rather ambivalent about his departure and will remain involved in other ways to continue to support arts and culture in Mesa.

### **Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only**

Keiko Dilbeck attended the Royale Theater that just opened in downtown Mesa and said it was fantastic. The owner, Andrea Beesley-Brown, and is known as the Midnight Movie Mamacita, moved the theatre from Tempe to Mesa this summer. The theater shows B movies.

Rob Schultz reminded everyone of the Eloy Torrez, Eloy Take Two, documentary that will be shown in Mesa Contemporary Arts this evening beginning at 7 p.m. Mr. Torrez is also a singer/songwriter and will be performing as well.

Wesley Ringel asked if Board members would consider moving the September meeting to the fifth Thursday in September, as he will be out of town on the fourth Thursday. Also, in November, the Board meeting date falls on Thanksgiving. Jean Kaminski, Administrative Support Assistant, will send an e-mail to pole the Board members and see what dates will work best.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein, Director  
Arts and Culture Department